

TRANSGENDER HEALTH

Injection Guide

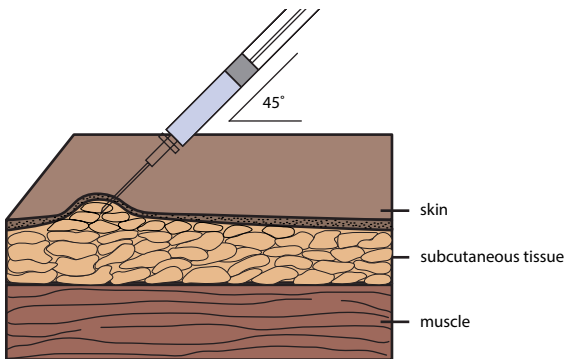


FENWAY  HEALTH

How to Give Yourself a Hormone Injection Subcutaneous (SubQ)

What is a Subcutaneous Injection?

A subcutaneous injection, delivers medication into the subcutaneous layer of tissue that is directly under the skin. Medication delivered this way is more slowly absorbed into the bloodstream than medication that is directly injected into the muscle.



Needle for SubQ injections are usually 25-26 Gauge and 5/8" (inch) in length. Medication should never be drawn up through these needles. Use a separate drawing up needle.

NEVER REUSE OR SHARE SYRINGES OR NEEDLES.

If you need needles or syringes and cannot afford to get them from your doctor or pharmacy, please visit a local needle exchange.

Massachusetts Needle Exchange Programs:

Boston: 800.383.2437 or 617.534.3967

Cambridge: 617.661.3040 or 617.680.1063

Holyoke: 413.315.3732

Northampton: 413.586.0310 or 800.696.7752

Provincetown: 508.487.8311

Springfield: 413.733.6639

STEP

1

Setting Up for the Injection

Find a comfortable, well lit working place and inject at the same time of day each time.

- **Clean your work area and assemble supplies:**
 - Medication in a vial
 - Disposable syringe and two needles—one 18 G needle (to draw up medication) and one subcutaneous injection needle (25 -26 G; 5/8 inch)
 - Alcohol swabs, two (one for vial, one for skin)
 - Puncture proof needle/sharps disposal container
- **Check the expiration date on the medication vial. Do not use a medication with visible particles, medication that is discolored, or is expired.**
- **Wash your hands. Hand washing is one of the most important things you can do to prevent infection.**

STEP

2

Preparing the Injection Dose

- Take the cap off the vial. Clean the rubber stopper with one alcohol swab, and then allow it to air dry.
- Check the package containing the syringe. If the package has been opened or damaged, do not use the syringe.
- Pull the 18 G needle cover straight off the syringe. Then, pull back the plunger and draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL or cc) as the dose of medication that your doctor prescribed.

Do not let the needle touch any surfaces.

- Keep the vial on your flat working surface and insert the needle straight down through the center of the rubber stopper into the bottle.

(figure 1)



(figure 1)

- Push the plunger of the syringe down and push the air from the syringe into the vial.
- Keeping the needle in the vial, turn the vial upside down.
- Position the needle so the liquid is covering the tip of the needle.

- Keeping the vial upside down, slowly pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with the medication to the number (mL or cc) that matches the dose your doctor ordered. (*figure 2*)



(*figure 2*)



(*figure 3*)

- Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe without removing the needle from the bottle. (*figure 3*)
- After air bubbles are gone, pull the plunger back to the number (mL or cc) marking on the syringe that matches your dose.



(figure 4)

- Pull the syringe with needle out of the bottle, remove the 18 G needle (discarding it into the sharps container, without recapping it), and place the smaller subcutaneous injection needle securely on the syringe. Remove the protective cap from the injecting needle.
- Check to make sure that you have the correct dose in the syringe. It is VERY important that you use the exact dose prescribed by your doctor. *(figure 4)*

STEP

3

Selecting and Preparing the Injection Site

There are several places you can give yourself a subcutaneous injection, including the sides or backs of your arms, the fronts of your thighs, or your abdomen. You may also use the buttocks as described above.



Injection Site on the side of the arm



Injection Site on the abdomen

If you choose to inject yourself in the abdomen, avoid the belly button or any bony areas.



Injection Site on the back of the arms



Injection Site on the thighs

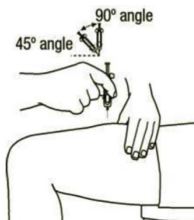
Wherever you choose to inject, you should be able to firmly grasp the skin and pinch it up into approximately a 1-inch fold.

STEP

4

Give the Injection

- Make certain your hands are clean.
- Clean the injection site skin with an alcohol swab; let the skin air dry.
- Hold the prepared syringe with the hand you will use to give the injection
- With the other hand, pinch a fold of skin. (You will inject into the skin between your fingers).
- With one quick and firm motion, insert the needle either directly into the skin fold at a 90 degree angle, or angle it slightly (45 degrees), if that is easier.



- **After inserting the needle under the skin, lift your hand away that is holding the skin.**
- **Gently pull back on the plunger of the syringe to check for blood.**
 - If you see blood in the syringe, do not inject the medicine, and remove the needle immediately. Replace the SubQ needle and try again at a different site.
 - If you do not see any blood in the syringe, you can complete the injection by pushing the medicine slowly under your skin.
- **Wait 5 seconds, and then pull back on the syringe to remove the needle from your skin. Dispose of the syringe and needle properly, using a sharps container.**
- **Gently press an alcohol swab on the injection site. Hold pressure on the site until there is no bleeding. You can use a band aid if needed.**

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Tips for Reducing Injection Pain

- Never reuse needles
- Use separate drawing up and injecting needles
- Let the skin dry fully from the alcohol wipe before beginning the injection
- Keep the muscles in the injection area warm and relaxed
- Inject medicine that is at room temperature
- Break through the skin quickly with the needle
- Insert the needle straight into the skin, and pull it straight out again without changing direction.

Instructions for Disposing of “Sharps”:

Improper disposal of syringes, needles, and other sharp objects can pose a health risk and damage the environment. In Massachusetts, it is illegal to dispose of sharps in standard household waste.

To dispose of medical sharps, first place them in a sealable, puncture-resistant container. You can purchase a home sharps container from most pharmacies. Alternatively, you can use a plastic container, such as a liquid-detergent bottle or milk jug, sealed with tape, to transport used sharps. Disposal sites will not accept loose needles or sharps in bags or glass containers.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health and local public health departments have established a network of community drop-off collection stations for used sharps.

To learn more, or find the disposal location nearest you, visit:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/aids/needles-syringes-disposal.pdf>

These instructions were adapted from the University of Michigan Guidelines available here: <http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/spinal-CordInjuryProgram/IMselfInjectionTesto.pdf>